From John Jay, Esq.

To Messrs. J. McKim, and others,
Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society:-

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Philadelphia.

Gentlemen:- It is with regret that I find myself unable to accept the invitation with which you have honoured me to assist at the Celebration of your Thirtieth Anniversary. The term of a generation has elapsed since that resolute assemblage at Philadelphia in 1833, and we who survive are permitted to see the great object which we then proposed in the course of rapid accomplishment.

Slavery has already ceased to have a Constitutional or legal existence in the rebel

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States, and the faith of the National Government and the American people has been ~~pledged~~ solemnly pledged to that act, by the Commander in Chief of our Army & Navy; and at his command also, rightfully issued under the same war-power and on grounds of military necessity, the Colored people are being raised to the rank of Soldiers and Citizens. But we cannot overlook the fact that these objects of our life-long devotion are being effected by other arguments than the narrow constitutional means and moral suasion ~~to~~ which the founders of your Society so rigidly limited its efforts.

Man proposes, but God orders; and it was ordained that the slave-power of America, hardening its heart like its prototype of Egypt, and reaving its bloody hand against the American people to the end that it might erect a slave Empire on the ruins of our Republic, showed, by its own act, forfeit the Constitutional guarantees ~~under~~ by which it was protected, ~~from aggression~~, and showed itself more ~~obstinate~~ its extinguishment by the tramp of armies & the crash of battle.

While the Slaveholders in their madness have thus inaugurated a war in which slavery is to perish, it is to be remembered that their allies at the North persistently allured them to their doom.

The first gun aimed against Sumter, and which sounded the knell of Slavery, would never have been fired, but for the assurance given by the Democratic leaders at the North, who believed the Masses to be as rotten as themselves, that they would assist the Rebels in revolutionizing the Government; and when the war had progressed for nearly two years, these rebel-sympathizers, foiled in their effort to convince the nation that it had no right to defend its existence, attempted to stay the National arm by discouraging volunteering at the North, and so compelled the President to call upon the black man to assist in maintaining our constitutional integrity. How promptly that call has been responded to, and how gallantly he has done his duty as a Soldier at Port Hudson, Milliken's Bend and Fort Wagner, and

how popular the scheme of enlisting colored troops has become from the simple fact that every black man who joins the army enables a white man to stay at home, are matters familiar to us all; and we can hardly fail to admire the inscrutable ways of Providence, as we wonderingly behold the abolition of slavery and the elevation of the colored race, for which we had labored for a quarter of a century with such small success, now being rapidly and effectually accomplished thro' the agency of Jefferson Davis, Mr. Vallandigham and Governor Seymour. He maketh, says Holy Writ, the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain.

A time so full of excitement as the present is not the most fitting for a calm review of the history of the Society, whose birth you are met to celebrate; and yet, as our work is so nearly finished, and your next decade will probably dawn upon the American continent unpolluted by the footsteps

of a slave, ~~Dreaded like~~ it may be well now
recall the political principles declared in the
Constitution ~~set~~ of your Society, as established at
Philadelphia, and reaffirmed in the face of
the malignant persecutions to which the Early
Members were subjected. They are not to be
lightly overlooked by the future historian of
America; for when the story of their ~~labors~~ struggle is
truly told, there will be no brighter page in
American history than that which records
their pure philanthropy, their intelligent patriotism,
their wise statesmanship, their moral courage,
and their heroic defence of Christian principle
and Constitutional right, against the domineering
power of an overwhelming brutal majority.
If the founders of the American Anti-Slavery
Society must yield to Jefferson Davis & his
Confederates, so far as the merit goes of organizing
a thoroughly efficient project of immediate
abolition, by so much as the bayonet and
the bullet, Iron-clads and Monitors,
Greek fire and Swamp-angels are more

convincing arguments than slow appeals to the Conscience & the reason, specially when the one is blinded & the other perverted, — they need yield to none in the claim ~~that they were the~~ which their Children will make for them, that they were the exemplars of that Spirit of devotion to Christian ~~of~~ truth, and American principles that to-day like a halo encircles ~~the~~ our Country & unites us in a common resolve to maintain, at whatever cost, against, our ~~their~~ slavery, European neutrality, the unity, the greatness & the freedom of our Republic —

"I am aware that this view differs somewhat from the portrait which has been usually painted of ~~the~~ American abolitionists; that they have been pictured as disunionists, amalgamationists and incendiaries, anxious to interfere with slavery in defiance of the Constitution, and to incite servile insurrection without regard to humanity — But who ~~was~~ was the painter of these darkly shadowed and distorted features? The slave-power, disguised

as a conservator of the Constitution, and attempting ~~[illegible]~~ to escape the ignominy which we rendered by invoking fraudulent side issues. Now that the slavepower is stripped of the mask under which it dared to impeach the patriotism of the Abolitionists, the American people will at their leisure review the charges which many of them have long believed.

Our cause is already accorded to them even by their intelligent opponents, and that is moral courage, indomitable pluck. A handful of men, without power, wealth or official influence, they arrayed themselves against American slavery, reigning supreme in Church and State, as did the English Quakers against the British slave trade; and altho' they had none other than moral weapons and an armory of facts, the slavepower recognized them at once as an adversary to be feared & crushed; for it dreaded, as was frankly

admitted, their influence not simply with the people of the North, but upon the Consciences of the slaveholders themselves.

The Members of your Society were compelled to march the furious onset of the slave power almost from the moment of their organization. Vilified by a slaveholding President, in their message they answered with a protest of great dignity. Fierce, denounced in both houses of Congress by slaveholders and their tools; slandered by a demoralized press; derided from the bench; sneered at by the bar, and damned from the pulpit; hooted at in political and religious Conventions; tabooed in wonted bar-aristocratic Circles; threatened with legislative pains and penalties, yet exercising their Constitutional prerogatives; hooted at by ruffian mobs, their houses sacked, their churches invaded, their liberties violated, they maintained their integrity with undaunted front, yielding no iota of principle, but grandly fulfilling the injunction, "Stand like a beaten anvil!" —

Press destroyed.

every new outrage, as they multiplied throughout the North, such as the dragging of a Clergyman from his pulpit in Northampshire, ~~sentencing him~~ and his sentence, by a convenient Magistrate, as a common brawler, to fifteen days hard labour, for having preached an anti-slavery sermon; or the leading of old Garrison, that early & faithful pioneer of Reform, about the streets of Boston with a rope around his ~~neck~~ body, amid the plaudits of ~~the~~ "gentlemen of standing" or the murder of the brave Lovejoy, forerunner of the Cowardly Mob and since hundreds by the same accursed party, so far from intimidating the abolitionists, only inspired them with a serener determination to rescue the country from the ruffianism of slavery, and ~~on the day~~ they stood, and on the page of history, will forever stand, ~~to~~ ~~succeed or what is necessary to be accomplished as the time and occasion~~ the successful champions of those constitutional rights — freedom of conscience and of speech, freedom

of the press and of debate & the right of petition.

In vindicating the founders of the Society from the charges preferred against them by the slaveholders, ~~charges~~ and on the strength of which they were so bitterly persecuted, charges which were swallowed with disgraceful credulity & willing ears, and which even now are sometimes repeated by men who lay claim to an ordinary degree of intelligence, it is necessary to refer to some historical facts in order that the opinions of individuals or of societies at a later date may not be confounded with the principles, pledges & conduct of the national organization formed at Philadelphia.

The principal charges on which its founders were arraigned were these:

1. That they disregarded and repudiated the Constitution of the United States.
2. That they were in favour of a dissolution of the Union.
3. That they advocated the right of Congress to

abolish slavery in the states.

4. That they favoured marriages between blacks & whites.

5. That they approved of and incited insurrection among the slaves.

When the Anti-Slavery Convention met at Philadelphia, Judge Jay, who was prevented from attending as a delegate, urged upon them by letter the necessity of an explicit declaration of their political principles to meet the barefaced charges already made against them.

The first number of the Emancipator had shortly before announced, that "Constitutional restrictions, independently of other considerations, forbid all other than moral interference with slavery in the southern states; and the Convention incorporated three distinct propositions in the Constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

1. That each state in which slavery exists, by the Constitution of the United States, has exclusive right to legislate in regard to abolition in that

States.

2. That they would endeavour in a Constitutional way to influence Congress to put an end to the domestic slave trade, & to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, likewise to prevent the extension of slavery to any State that might thereafter be admitted to the Union.

10. That the Society would never in any way countenance the oppressed in vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force.

Under this Constitution these distinct pledges the Society rapidly increased in numbers, strength & influence. Its lecturers, agents, newspapers & publications aroused the Country, and Auxiliary Societies sprang up far & near, numbering in 1836, 527; in 1837, 1.006; in 1838, 1256; and in 1839, 1650 auxiliaries had ~~recognized the~~ adopted the principles of the Constitution.

It was to crush anti-slavery effort under these clearly defined limitations that mobs were

inaugurated in 1834 to Jack Chandler Thomas in Keene, & to Lisbet W. Garrison in Boston, and "Conservative Meetings" were held in various Northern Cities "to Consign to Execration" the abolitionists as "abandoned knaves & hypocrites".

In 1835 the Board of our Society issued an address to the public for the advisement of those who had been led to believe that they "were pursuing measures at variance not only with the Constitutional rights of the South, but with the precepts of humanity & religion".

This address was signed by Arthur Tappan, President, and also by John Rankin, William Jay, Elizur Wright, A. L. Cox, Lewis Tappan, Sam. E. Cornish, S. S. Joselyn & Theod. S. Wright. As it excited marked attention both in America & in Europe & in the fullest official exposition of the views of the Society at that time, I can with perhaps allow me to quote briefly its several heads. They were as follows

That Congress has no more right to abolish slavery in the Southern States than in the French West India Islands.

2. That the exercise of any other than moral influence to induce abolition by the State Legislatures would be unconstitutional.
3. That Congress had the right to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and that it was their duty to efface so foul a stain from the National Escutcheon.
4. That American Citizens have the right to express & publish their opinions of the Constitution, laws and institutions of any and every State & nation under heaven, and "we never intend to surrender the liberty of speech, of the press or of conscience — blessings we have inherited from our fathers, and which we mean, so far as we are able, to transmit unimpaired to our children"
5. That they had uniformly deprecated all forcible attempts on the part of the slaves to recover their freedom
6. That they would deplore any such insurrection, on account of the calamities that would attend it & the occasion it might give for increased severity.

7. That the Charge that they had sent publication to the South, designed to incite the Negroes to insurrection, was utterly & unequivocally false.

8. That the Charge that they had sent any publication to the Slaves was false.

9. That they had employed no agents in the Slave States to distribute their publication.

10. They reiterated their Conviction that Slavery was sinful, injurious to the Country, & that immediate Abolition would be both safe & wise. & that they had no intention of refraining from the expression of such views in future.

11. They reiterated their views in reference to the Elevation of the Coloured people.

12. They said: "We are accused of acts that tend to a dissolution of the Union, & of wishing to destroy it. We have never calculated the value of the Union, because we believe it to be inestimable, & that the abolition of slavery will remove the chief danger of its dissolution."

In conclusion they said: "Such, fellow-citizens, are

our principles. Are they unworthy of republicans to Christians?" — and, after referring to the unconstitutional usurpation of the Government to protect slavery & to prevent free discussion & the freedom of the mails, they close with the possible warning:— "Surely, we need not remind you that if you submit to such an encroachment on your liberties, the days of our Republic are numbered, & that although abolitionists may be the first, they will not be the last victims offered at the shrine of arbitrary power."

As the Country, under the ~~our~~ stirring appeals & startling facts put forth by the American Society & its auxiliaries & its members, awoke to a new appreciation of the danger of slavery to the Republic as well as to the slave, some earnest abolitionists, stung by a sense of its excessive wrong, & unwilling to await the slow remedy of moral suasion, or limited congressional interference, sought to find some shorter method of accomplishing its destruction. Here & there one inclined to the belief

that Congress could constitutionally abolish it; others that its very existence was unconstitutional and should be so declared by the Supreme Court; and a few, at a later period, that it could be effected only by a dissolution of the Union.

But all of these suggestions were absolutely overcome. Albany with the Constitution adopted in Philadelphia. In 1838 the late Alvan Stewart, Esq., of Utica, attempted to change that Constitution by an elaborate argument in favour of the right of Congress to abolish slavery in the States, and the proposed amendment was urged with great vigour & eloquence, but it was as vigorously resisted as unsound in principle & inconsistent with good faith, & the attempt signally failed.

In the same year the Massachusetts Society reconsidered some resolution that had been hastily adopted & resolved, "that Congress has no power to abolish slavery in the several States of the Union".

The same year W. Ellis Gray Loring wrote to Judge Jay from Boston: "I know of but one or two persons here who believe in

the power of compel over Slavery in the States."

With the division that occurred a year or two later in the American Society, the removal of the old Board to Boston, the formation in New York of the American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the national unity of the organization was broken, & widely differing views began to be expressed by anti-slavery men, who did not hold to the principles declared at Philadelphia upon the religious & political bearings of the question.

Prominent individuals divided upon the status of Slavery, the best mode of combating it; and neither the Liberty party, headed by ~~Mr~~ Mr Birney on abolitionists, Gerrit Smith & William Goodell, nor ~~the Rev~~ Wendell Phillips, the golden-mouthed exponent of the views entertained at Boston, fairly represented the ~~principles~~ Constitutional principles defined by the American Society & adopted by ~~the~~ nearly two thirds and auxiliary association.

Both — and this is an historic fact of great interest and importance, — as the increasing violence & usurpations of the Slave power induced

the conviction that if the abolitionists had commenced the struggle to obtain freedom for the slave, the American people must continue it to preserve their own; and with their characteristic common sense the people devoted themselves to the task of overthrowing the power & checking the extension, and organized for the purpose, under the wise lead of abolitionists, in 1855, the Republican party. They incorporated into that platform the identical constitutional principles on which, thirty years ago, the American Anti-Slavery Society took its stand —

On these principles, for the holding of which and our fathers we were denounced as incendiaries & fanatics, Fremont was nominated & Lincoln was elected, and the sufficiency of these principles — the ~~positive~~ restriction of slavery & extension, the abolition of slavery in the District, & of the interstate slave trade, & the emancipation of the national Government from the control of the slave power, — to cripple and eventually to destroy slavery, was significantly recognized by the slaveholders

themselves when they resolved, some twenty five or thirty years ago, that the instant these principles were triumphant in the National Government, they would anticipate the overthrow of slavery by overthrowing the Republic.

Prejudices deeply seated may obscure, perhaps, for another generation, the credit due to the gentlemen whose careful action in convention you are met to celebrate; but the candid historian will admit that they exhibited not simply a blind devotion to the cause of the slave, but a conscientious regard to the integrity of the Constitution & the welfare & happiness of the Country. He will record that it was the abolitionists who, avoiding all infringement on the constitutional rights of the slaveholder, would allow no infringement on his own, & that to them belongs the honour of vindicating the rights of petition & maintaining against brute violence & legislative menace, freedom of speech & of the press. If while he will be compelled to acknowledge that in many things they were defeated, that they offered unsuccessfully the Seminole war & the annexation of Texas under the late rebel John Tyler,

that they failed in arresting that most wicked war ~~of~~ waged by the slave power ~~under~~ against Mexico under James K. Polk, and ~~or~~ that accursed act, the fugitive slave bill, under the renegade abolitionist Millard Fillmore, and ~~or~~ the removal of ~~a~~ the ancient land-mark fixed by the Missouri Compromise, under Franklin Pierce, he may say with truth, that they checkmated the slave power under James Buchanan in its attempt to force slavery into Kansas, and that they forever terminated its usurped supremacy upon this continent, when, defeating ~~its rebel candidates~~ John Bell & Breckenridge, they elected ~~the~~ as President Abraham Lincoln!

Whatever errors of opinion or of action there may have been on the part of individuals or societies at a recent date, the political principles declared at Philadelphia have stood the test of time since, than received the emphatic endorsement of the American people; and the anti slavery movement in the United States, with few exceptions that more plainly show the rule, has been marked by a statesmanlike characteristic, now crowned

with success, the loss of Kentucky was no delay, injustice or disappointment could ~~[illegible]~~ impair or disturb.

Their progress was not always observed by the unobservant, & we heard occasionally that abolition was dead; but when the horn came that the slave power, drunken with blood and insolent with oppression, deemed itself strong enough to destroy the Republic, anticipating an easy victory by the aid of its fellow-traitors in the north, the horn had come also, & they knew it not, when the loyal American people were educated to that point of patriotism, pluck & constitutional strength. That they were able to meet the blow, treacherously as it was given, and to return it with a vigour that is sending slavery & the Rebellion into a common grave.

It is an interesting fact, that while the rebel slaveholders who still regard as their friends, the peace democrats and conditional unionists at the north, who will then hearson under they them

disguise. both Slaveholders & Slavery, long before the Proclamation of Emancipation, foresaw the inevitable issue of the Contest; and Beauregard Came much nearer the truth than he has sometimes done, when he forbade his ~~Soldiers~~ rebel troops to call by any other name than abolitionist, every Soldier who followed the old flag of his Country, keeping step to the music of the Union & ready to die in its defence.

As we recall reverently the dead upon your roll of those who met at Philadelphia, to give what has since proven to be a Second Declaration of Independence, let us remember also tenderly, our brave heroes, who, slain by Slavery, sleep beneath the battle-fields of the Republic. & their Comrades, our ~~fo~~ sons & brothers, who now maintain against that ~~accursed~~ inhuman power, the ~~Supremacy~~ integrity, the Supremacy, & the honor of our Country.

Always, Gentlemen,
Most faithfully Yours,
John Ray

Newark
Dec 3rd 1863.

John Jay.